

# **Tour to Union Station - Los Angeles**

**Submitted by Kathie Mc Call (Jan 17,2009)**

On this warm and sunny Saturday morning 9 Model A's and 1 red Thunderbird with a total of 21 people set out from Coco's on Valley View headed for Union Station in Los Angeles. This was an all-surface road tour, which had been scoped out by Wagon Master John Riggs and trusty navigator Gwen. What a tour it was, one member described it as "Mr. Toad's Wild Ride" as we traversed through parts of L.A. never before seen, along Bellflower Blvd, Lakewood (Rosemead) and finally Washington Blvd. We drove over what we recognized as a truck route past the wholesale markets for produce, flowers, toys and various and sundry other industrial products. All in all it was a very eye-opening and educational journey just getting to our destination.

Union Station itself was pretty quiet, even on a Saturday morning and there was plenty of time to explore and appreciate the beauty, planning and architecture of this landmark, finished in 1939. There was much to see and investigate including the now closed original Fred Harvey Restaurant. The spacious rooms were opened up for our group and we imagined what it was like in its heyday. The design throughout these magnificent buildings still leaves the observer in awe when reflecting back to the 1920's and 30's when it was built. We were able to observe several of the Amtrak trains coming and going and travelers with their suitcases either waiting in the still beautiful and spacious waiting rooms or outside patios, or disembarking from near or far away places. Eight pairs of ramps lead to loading platforms after traversing through the 500 foot tunnel, ending at the 16 public tracks, 2 of which are used for Metro Gold Line.

Following our walking tour we got back in the cars to travel just 2 blocks down Alameda Blvd. to "The original" Philippe's Restaurant, famous for its French dip sandwiches, hot mustard condiment and .09 cent coffee! What a surprise after everyone jockeying for a parking spot when we stepped inside to find at least 15 people behind the order counter trying to keep up with the hundreds of people placing their orders. The restaurant and building itself is celebrating 100 years in business, and it doesn't look like they'll be going out of service any time soon. We found that Philippe's has been highlighted on the Huel Howser (California's Gold) program and was recently featured on a major television network as the BEST place in L.A. for a sandwich. It's definitely worth the experience, as is the Union Station. While at the restaurant we recognized Gwen Riggs 84th birthday with a hearty rendition of Happy Birthday.

Gwen and John planned this tour and those of us who benefited from their efforts are appreciative of the time and effort they put into making it a very special day. A small group of 3 A's drove another few miles up the road to the San Antonio Winery for a cup of coffee and a peak into the beautiful dining room and wine tasting counter, while the others found their way back home. If you haven't been on a tour with the OCMAFCA, get your car out of the garage (either your modern or your A) and meet some new friends or spend time with the established friends.